

Staff Council Minutes  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
November 1, 2005

1.0 Call to Order

President Horne called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

The following members were present: Susan Bone, Tyia Brooks, John Burks, Kim Busche, Melissa Carpenter, Scott Carr, Steve Coleman, Kameron Dale, Wynde Fitts, Michelle Fleming, Katheryn Hood, Valerie Horne, Sharon Hughes, Susan King, Virginia Kittrell, Keith Long, Karen Lott, Robert Lowe, Beverly McNeese, Keith Mitchell, Vassie Owens, Pam Posey, Tonia Shaw, Ray Stevens, Brad Sumrall, and Mary Sumrall.

2.0 Adoption of Agenda

President Horne asked if there were any changes to the agenda. There were none. Motion to accept the agenda as written was made by Susan Bone and seconded by John Burks. Unanimously approved.

3.0 Forum Speaker

Dr. Shelby Thames, President of The University of Southern Mississippi

Dr. Thames thanked Staff Council for letting him come to talk about the state of the institution. He discussed where we are, where we are going now, and what the future holds for Southern Miss.

He has visited the coast several times since Hurricane Katrina. There are really no words to express the devastation and destruction. All along the coast, at least 200 - 300 yards from the beach where homes and businesses used to be, are nothing but concrete slabs and concrete pilings. A lot of Mississippi history and culture have been lost. The VA hospital was heavily damaged. Our people have suffered greatly. The loss of life has been especially hard.

The University of Southern Mississippi coast campus has a tremendous amount of damage. All the buildings were either destroyed or very seriously damaged. Currently we are out of business in Long Beach and are not even thinking about opening there for at least another year. The university's research foundation fortunately had purchased the old Garden Park Hospital located in Gulfport directly behind Memorial Hospital. The plan has been to use this building to help make money for the foundation. This foundation is the same as the Development Foundation and the Athletic Foundation. The second floor of this building has been leased to Memorial Hospital for care of transitional patients. The university is using the money received from this lease as well as borrowing money to help renovate 50,000 square feet of educational space. Progress is coming along. We opened for classes on October 3.

The Jackson County campus fortunately had very little damage. Mississippi Coast Community College built a \$2 million building on their campus to house educational classes from all of the major state universities. We are the only ones in the building now; in fact, it even has our name on the outside of it. We use this facility for most of the classes taught on this campus. There are still some classes being taught in local elementary schools due to class size and scheduling. We need more room!

Enrollment was to have been around 3000 on all coast campuses for the fall semester this year. We had hoped for 6000 by 2007. Currently, our enrollment is 1600. There are approximately 1800 students, who had registered to attend classes before Hurricane Katrina but are now homeless as well as jobless, and are unable to attend school. We are trying to find funding assistance, such as grants or scholarships, for anyone who wants to attend but can't.

We are making a request of \$300 million to rebuild. It will take years to recover from this major disaster. We will fill the effects of Hurricane Katrina for 5 to 7 years. The university will be OK and we will be a lot stronger. Our enrollment will grow. People understand now that they need an education to succeed. Participation will increase when people are able to find a way to get their basic needs met.

The university has not terminated any employee on any of our coast campuses since the storm. When our people see the devastation each day that they must face, they need the security of knowing their job is OK to make it. For a majority of our employees, everything they own is gone, and this is a very emotional time. We are trying to help in any way we can. Governor Barbour has signed a bill that will allow us to put FEMA trailers on Hackleberry Hill, which is state land. This will offer much-needed housing. When you see the governor or his chief of staff for education matters, Jason Dean, please tell them "Thank you." We are working with them, FEMA and others do rebuild.

We were very smart business people. We had insurance. We are the only university who had insurance. We pay 1 million per year for this. If we did not have insurance, repayment from this disaster would have been what the city and state could pay. FEMA would not have been able to help us rebuild. The way it will work since we do have insurance is whatever our insurance company doesn't cover FEMA will make up. This could take 6 to 7 years for us to get the FEMA money. However, we need the cash now to rebuild. We need to know when the money will come and how much money it will be. We do have a plan in action for this.

On the Hattiesburg campus, we handled the hurricane very well. It is estimated that we lost upwards of 500 trees. A lot of people helped out after the crisis and during the crisis as well. Our police chief Bob Hopkins, did an excellent job of coordination during the entire emergency period. We had approximately 1200 students who stayed on campus during the hurricane. Thanks to housing and many students we were able to get our

dorms cleaned and ready for students to return very quickly. This was very important since a fair number of our students are from the coast and New Orleans and their homes are gone. Chief Hopkins had purchased new homeland security radios just prior to the storm. I had mine on for most of the time we were in the emergency period. Well after 1 and 2 in the morning, I could hear members of our recovery team working and talking about the cleanup that was being done. Our partner, ARAMARK, fed three hot meals a day/every day, beginning Tuesday morning after the storm to anyone who walked up to the building. Our grounds crew began immediately returning the campus to a safe place.

After the storm I received a call from OK Foods, a chicken production company. Tom Webb, a Southern Miss alumni, owns this company. He is Carl Nicholson's brother-in-law. They brought large truckloads of chicken and food. Since we had ARAMARK, the food service on campus was covered; we directed the food trucks to the multipurpose center.

A big concern is we have less than half of the students we had planned for on our coast campus; thus, we are getting less than half of our planned tuition revenue. Money will be tight, so everyone needs to help make sure we are running as efficiently as possible. If we are going to keep people employed in the face of this unexpected cut in funding, we will all have to help with this. Our people - faculty and staff - are very important. Keeping everyone employed is a major challenge we will have to face.

The university's new Marketing and Public Relations director is Margie Putnam Jepson. She is on board now. A national search was done and we had over 65 applicants. From those applicants our committee whittled it down to three very capable finalists. Dr. Thames had received an e-mail from Margie Jepson in the past and was very impressed. She has the energy we will need to make the next step.

The enrollment figures we have show that we are either even or up a few percent. It was anticipated we would be up only 3 percent after the storm. However, due to our excellent team's quick response, we were able to announce we would reopen the Hattiesburg campus on September 12 and hold a full fall semester. The Gulf Coast temporary campus worked hard and did a great job to open. People need to see positive things in a crisis, and Southern Miss has been a positive thing for many people.

We have met with SACS. Our probation was due to reporting concerns dealing with Continuing Education. Our team made this a university-wide project, and once again everyone has worked very hard gathering information. We were to have a visit to our campuses from 11 to 17 people who would come take a hard look at us. We dealt with this on a personal basis. The committee was so pleased with our efforts that they canceled the physical visit in favor of a phone interview of three people. They asked reasonable questions. We have been advised that the committee will recommend full reinstatement. This long process has taken care of two things: removing us from probation

and getting us ready for our 10 - year SACS review, which is coming up this April.

In the areas of research, Southern Miss is doing very well. New hires at Southern Miss have brought in \$3.5 million in new research funding in the last 2 years. This is significant in helping with our funding. One third of our operational revenue comes from research. In the late 1970s 75 percent came from the state, and last year 25 percent came from the state. We get money from three sources: tuition, state funding and research funding. It is imperative that we continue to do research and bring in research funding. This is critical to our universities continued growth.

We have never had an equipment budget. Every piece of research equipment that we have has been paid for by research grant money. This is important because this helps us use what state funding we get more efficiently. Grants and contracts are available in many ways. If you are any one you work with is interested in writing a grant, please contact Connie Wyldemon or Cecil Burge. They will help you. If you write a grant and it is denied, try again. Most grants will send you the review of why your grant wasn't accepted. Rewrite the grant and try again. Money is available. Grant writing may be a new experience, but it can be fun and very rewarding.

Southern Miss is looking forward to a great basketball season this year with both our lady's and men's teams. Recruiting has been very fruitful and you should notice a big difference on the hardwood. You're needed to fill the seats. We also have two remaining home football games left. At our last football game against NC state, we didn't play very well at all. It was painful to watch. Hopefully this was our only down game and we will be back on our feet again. Please be in the seats. Support from faculty and staff is very important. These are our students, and our support means something to them.

The new Student Life Center is on track to open this summer. This is a beautiful 250,000 square foot addition to Southern Miss. Our International Building is very nice. If you haven't had a chance to visit it, you should. The Polymer Science \$7 million addition is complete and we are enjoying every inch of it.

The first estimate we received from the architect on the Trent Lott Building was \$12 million, but \$22.5 million is the actual figure. Dr. Thames was stunned and upset over the difference. It has been a major issue to find the money to make up the difference, but we have done it.

Our stadium expansion is in the works. We have been able to sell the rights to the skyboxes as part of the revenue needed for this project. This income along with bonds is what will complete this project. We are renovating Reed Green Coliseum. Phase two of this project will be 6 million to 7 million and that figure is up 33 percent from the original plan. Dr. Thames is always surprised when architects and contractors just throw around phrases such as "a couple of million here, 6 -7 million more there." It is quiet a struggle to keep up with increases in costs to run a business. State revenues are going down and this year will be no exception.

We have had a request from several alumni to consider skyboxes for our baseball field. We have the need to increase this stadium as well.

Our campus look is improving every day. The new walkways are very nice and finally coming to completion. Greg Lassen has put many hours into this project. The delay in completion for the large Memorial Drive walkway was due to the death of the contractor in the middle of the project. A new contractor had to be found to finish the job. Greg Lassen would also like everyone to know there are plenty of parking spaces in the lot he parks in each day.

Our Southern Miss staff members are very important. Each staff member must do his or her job and do it well. The bond created between some of our staff and students is a major factor in keeping our students in school. We all need to do what we can to help students feel at home here and want to stay in school. We each have a part in helping students do their best. Your hard work is appreciated.

#### 4.0 Approval of Minutes

##### 4.1 August and October Minutes

Minutes are not back from proofreader yet. We will have all proposed minutes available for the December meeting.

#### 5.0 Officer Reports

##### 5.1 President's Report - Valerie Horne

5.1.1 Action Items - there are no new action items.

##### 5.1.2 Trisha Wilbanks

Trisha Wilbanks has left the university. She sends her best regards to everyone. We will go to the last poll and contact the next in line for her position.

##### 5.1.3 Welcome Beverly McNeese and Keith Mitchell

Beverly McNeese is back on Staff Council. She will be filling the position vacated by Matthew Cox. Keith Mitchell will be filling the position vacated by \_\_\_\_\_ position.

##### 5.1.4 Liaison Committee Reports

###### Cabinet - October 3, 2005

Dr. Paul reported that commencement would be Saturday, December 17, 2005, at 2:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Dr. Exline reported that the accreditation committee feels sure that the university's probation status will be removed. We should receive the official notice on December 5, 2005.

###### Provost Council - October 7, 2005

Dr. Grimes reported that Margie Jepson has been hired as Public Relations director and that she will start Monday. He also reported that Dr. Tom Meredith, the new state

commissioner of IHL, will tour the Gulf Coast on Monday. Fred Varando was welcomed as the acting director of Non Credit Programs Conferences.

#### IHL - October 19, 2005

Dr. Thames presented a slide show on post-Katrina conditions. Dr. Meredith indicated that he was happy he had visited the Gulf Coast and he encouraged others to do so.

#### Customer Service Training - October 26, 2005

I met with representatives from USA Funds, Am South, and Trustmark Bank. They are willing to come and offer university-wide customer service training for employees. I contacted Catherine Herron, president of AOP, and she referred me to Melissa Carpenter.

#### Cabinet - October 31, 2005

Stephanie Meincki, director for Mississippi Center for Community and Civic Engagement, gave a presentation.

Dr. Paul reported that Black and Gold Day will be Saturday, November 19, 2005.

Bob Pierce reported that an e-mail will be going out to alumni for housing opportunities on the Gulf Coast for faculty and staff.

Jonathan Krebs reported that his attorney general was working with Greg Lassen on rezoning and parking issues.

Richard Giannini reported that the Tulane game will be a faculty/staff appreciation event and that faculty and staff will receive two free tickets.

Tim Ryan reported that we have received over \$80,000 for the Katrina Relief Fund and that the committee would be meeting soon to distribute the funds.

- 5.1.5 USA Funds University offered new customized customer service training. There are handouts available to explain this program. We are looking at partnering with AOP to do training and moral boosters.

## 5.2 President-Elect's Report - Wynde Fitts

### 5.2.1 Fleece Fund -raiser

We are able to offer two styles - full zip front or half zip front. These can be ready very quickly because we are getting them from a local supplier. Each fleece will have the eagle head logo and the wording "Southern Miss Staff" directly under it. The color selected is heather gray.

We will need to order now for Staff Council members to purchase. This will be a great selling tool if everyone can see the members wearing theirs.

Motion was made to sell the full zip for \$25, the half zip for \$22, and that each staff member be responsible for selling five fleece jackets by Kameron Dale and seconded by John Burks.

General Discussion was held. A friendly amendment was asked for by Kameron Dale to change the cost per jacket to \$25 for all jackets. Motion passed - 27 for, 0 against, 0 abstained.

General Discussion was held regarding how these would be advertised, who would collect money, when and how would they be distributed, should we consider putting Staff and Faculty on the front. The questions were raised to clarify the purpose of selling the fleece jackets. This is to raise money for our scholarship fund and for a staff moral booster. Motion was made to move the discussions regarding advertisement, promotion, order taking, deposits, bill payment, distribution and how the funds will be distributed to the Development Committee by Wynde Fitts and seconded by Susan Bone. Motion carried - 26 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstained.

### 5.3 Secretary's Report - Kim Busche

#### 5.3.1 Call for Proxies

The following members were represented by proxy:  
Toni Stringer by Virginia Kittrell.

The following members were absent without proxy:  
Kady Beaoui, David Byrd.

### 5.4 Secretary-Elect's Report - John Burks - no report

## 6.0 Unfinished Business

### 6.1 Filling Kaline Butirich's position

Virginia Kittrell reported we are not sure how we are going to fill this position. The last person on the list to fill this position has declined. We will be looking for someone to volunteer.

## 7.0 Standing Committee Reports

### 7.1 Constitution and Bylaws - Ray Stevens - no report

### 7.2 Legislative - John Burks and Margaret Firth - no report

### 7.3 Salaries and Benefits -

President Horne will be contacting a member of the Salaries and Benefits committee to chair that committee. Trisha Wilbanks sent an email report stating that they were still waiting a response from Dr. Thames.

### 7.4 University Relations and Cultural Diversity - Mary Sumrall

I first want to apologize to my committee. We were scheduled to meet the day after Hurricane Katrina hit, and since our return to work, we have all been very busy. I have been involved with another matter which came from the President's Council dealing with a salaries and benefits issue, so I have neglected the workings of the University Relations and Cultural Diversity Committee.

The committee has been working on the following action items. I have gathered information about the items and submitted the information to the committee for approval. The committee makes the following recommendations:

The committee recommends closing item #106 dated April 6, 2004, regarding the \$40 parking fee. The parking fee was increased to \$50 this year. The administration has worked with the Staff Council and is deducting \$25 from the September payroll and \$25.00 from the February payroll.

Item #112 requests that the speed limit on Turk Circle be increased from 10 miles per hour. The current speed limit was set due to the high pedestrian traffic in this area during the day hopefully to prevent any accidents caused by students darting out between cars. There are various speed limits around campus-10, 15, 20, and 30 miles per hour based on conditions, so speed limits are changed from time to time. For example, Chief Hopkins is currently considering lowering the speed limit on East Memorial Drive because traffic warrants a change. He will certainly consider increasing the speed limit on Turk Circle if the Staff Council submits a written recommendation to him.

Item #113 deals with the perception of Gulf Coast employees who feel like "second - class citizens" in the university community. Hopefully this feeling is improving following Hurricane Katrina since faculty and staff on the Hattiesburg campus have reached out in numerous ways to help employees on the Gulf Coast (clothing drive, baked goods, yard cleanup, etc.). Further recommendations will be coming at a later date.

The last action item we are dealing with is item #114, requesting a drop box for Financial Affairs to be located at the post office. This drop box would be locked and accessible only to Financial Affairs personnel. Mr. Gregg Lassen asked that we send him a written request, and he will confer with Allison Easterwood in Financial Affairs. He knows of no reason this cannot be done.

7.5 Technology and Training - Donna Donegan - no report

8.0 Liaison to University Committee reports

8.1 Parking Management Committee-Stacey Ready  
Committee has not met.

## 8.2 President's Council – Stacy Ready and Mary Sumrall

The President's Council met on Wednesday, October 12, 2005, at 7 a.m. with 19 members present, as well as Dr. Shelby Thames, president; Dr. Joan Exline, assistant to the president; Mr. Russ Willis, Director of Human Resources; and Ms. Margie Jepson, director of Marketing and Public Relations.

The minutes were approved as presented.

Russ Willis reported on scholarships, which are available through the Institutions of Higher Learning. At the present time single dependents of faculty and staff are given a tuition scholarship. Also, faculty and staff can take up to six hours with tuition waived. Mary Sumrall asked if the board might entertain a proposal to offer the tuition waiver to spouses of faculty and staff. Dr. Thames agreed to present a proposal to the board through the Presidents' Council after Russ Willis and the Staff Council have conducted a survey of all employees to determine the number of spouses who might take advantage of this opportunity. Mr. Willis said he would also talk with other Human Resources directors at their quarterly meeting to get their response to this idea and ask them to survey their employees.

Dr. Steve Bushardt asked whether the university still offers an out-of-state tuition waiver to part-time graduate students. Dr. Thames was not aware that this has ever been done.

Mr. Willis then discussed the new holiday schedule. We have the same number of holidays at Christmas, but they are delayed by two days. Employees work through Thursday, December 22, so the first holiday is Friday, December 23.

Ms. Margie Jepson, director of Marketing and Public Relations, was introduced, and she highlighted her background and mentioned several priorities she and her staff will be working on.

Dr. Thames discussed rebuilding USM Gulf Coast. He and Dr. Tom Meredith, commissioner of Higher Education, toured the Coast campuses recently. Dr. Thames would like to sell the Gulf Park campus and rebuild Southern Miss Gulf Coast around I-10. We did have insurance, but it may take time to get all the details settled. If the campus is rebuilt along I-10, Dr. Thames is sure that the other universities (State, Ole Miss, Jackson State) will want to offer classes also at a universities center. There will be members of the board who will support this plan. Faculty and staff should be contacting legislators now to express strong opposition to allowing the other universities to offer classes on the Gulf Coast. Employees should also contact members of a 30-member commission established by the governor to study and make recommendations regarding education on the Coast. This task will be completed in the next 90 days.

Dr. Joe Olmi questioned Dr. Thames thoroughly about the process whereby some faculty and a few staff got raises this past

year. Recommendations came from the deans; most departmental chairs were not involved. Dr. Thames said those employees we could not afford to lose got raises. Dr. Thames stressed the raises were for merit, so if anyone wants to be considered for a raise, they must make sure their supervisor is aware of their productivity.

Dr. Exline reported that the SACS special committee has recommended that Southern Miss be removed from probation. This will not be final until the Commission on Colleges votes in December.

Thanks to Pam Posey, Karen Lott, Sharon Hughes and Valerie Horne, we have the Spouse Scholarship Survey ready to mail today. These will go to the Post Office after this meeting. Depending on the survey, hopefully a recommendation can be made to the IHL Board at the next meeting. Offering a spouse scholarship is a great recruiting tool. This is already being done at one of the junior colleges in the state and it works very well.

### 8.3 Wellness Program - Susan Bone

The Wellness Council has met and revisited the proposal about membership. John Burks' office is taking advantage of the Wellness on Wheels program.

### 8.4 IT Advisory Board - Virginia Kittrell -

The minutes of the last meeting are not available yet. One item being looked at is the cost of offering credit card payment online. This costs the university \$54,000 per year. iTech doesn't have the funding to cover this.

## 9.0 New Business

### 9.1 Holiday Celebration

Discussion was held about the type of holiday celebration we would like to have this year. One suggestion was to move the celebration to sometime in the morning, possibly replacing the December Staff Council meeting. The date being considered is December 6.

## 10.0 Ad Hoc Committee Reports

### 10.1 Scholarship Committee - Virginia Kittrell

#### 10.1.1 Staff Council Scholarship Fund

A survey was sent to Southern Miss staff members who, based on criteria developed by Staff Council, would be eligible for the scholarship. Results indicated that 85.6 percent of staff members who are not currently enrolled in classes agree or strongly agree that a textbook scholarship would encourage their enrollment. Therefore, Staff Council is implementing a scholarship fund to encourage and assist staff with the cost of taking classes.

Staff members of Southern Miss who are taking classes may submit an application to assist with textbook purchases, lab fees, supplies and/or educational expenses.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Staff members with a gross income from Southern Miss of \$30,000 or less
- GPA of 2.0
- Write a statement of goals and justification for scholarship amount requested

Funds will be applied to the student's Business Office account after 10 days into the term to confirm registration. Funds are awarded up to \$100. Eligibility is for one semester during an academic year (July to July). The Staff Council Scholarship Committee will review applications, verify eligibility, confirm registration of classes in PeopleSoft, determine recipients and process paperwork for scholarships to be transferred to Business Office accounts. Deadline for application to be submitted to committee is one month prior to beginning of term to be used for. Committee will verify registration 10 days after term begins.

The vote by Staff Council on acceptance of the criteria will be held at the December meeting.

## 10.2 Development Committee - Wynde Fitts

The committee will meet Friday, November 9 in McLemore Hall Room 309.

## 11.0 Announcements

11.1 Executive Committee - Tuesday, November 8

11.2 Southern Miss vs. Marshall - Tuesday, November 8

11.3 IHL Board Meeting - Thursday, November 17

11.4 Southern Miss vs. Houston - Sunday, November 13

11.5 Southern Miss vs. Memphis - Saturday, November 19

11.6 Southern Miss vs. Tulane - Saturday, November 26

11.7 Southern Miss Basketball Game - Sunday, November 6

11.8 United Way Team Captians need to turn in pledge cards.

11.9 American Heart Walk is scheduled for November 12.

## 12.0 Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by John Burks, and seconded by Pam Posey. Unanimously passed.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kim Busche, Secretary  
November, 2005